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Testimony before the
Committee on Higher Education
and Employment Advancement

Governor's Bill No. 6390,

An Act Concerning Access To Postsecondary Education
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The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference supports Governor's Bill No. 6390, which would provide in-State college tuition rates to undocumented students who have attended a Connecticut high school for four years and have signed an affidavit attesting to their efforts to become a legal citizen of the United States. These young men and woman have a major goal in life, which is to become successful and contributing members of our State and nation and this legislation will help them to achieve that goal.

The Conference urges you to look beyond the negative attitude toward undocumented immigrants which is pervasive in our society today and consider the facts when reviewing this legislation. First, the young people affected by this bill have been living in our State for many years and had no part in determining whether or not to enter this country illegally. Their entry into this country was not their decision, but that of their parents. These young men and women should not be denied the chance to a successful life because of choices their parents made years ago. Secondly, these students have already been attending our public schools, many since the elementary grade levels. This bill would help them to continue their education and become productive members of society. The fact is that these young people are already members of our society and will continue to be well into the future. This legislation will help to determine the quality of that future.

It is natural within the political process to look at the fiscal impact of legislation. Fortunately, the financial impact of this legislation has been determined to be minimal by the State's Office of Fiscal Analysis. Our State colleges will not be exposed to a negative financial impact if this legislation is enacted into law. It is also highly questionable that this legislation would lead to the denial of slots in State colleges to legal students, since many of the colleges

they would attend have sufficient openings. The adoption of this legislation, therefore, is not one of financial concern or available openings, but one of fairness. Is it fair potentially to deny approximately 200-250 young students who have worked hard in their academic life a chance at a better future? All people deserve the opportunity to better themselves socially and economically, and the students affected by this legislation should not be denied that opportunity.

We are a nation of immigrants and should be proud of this fact. Each of the different immigrant groups has brought diversity to our society, making it rich in cultural differences, customs and social tolerance. Our history is full of people struggling to find a better life for themselves and their families within the borders of our nation. Unfortunately, history also reveals that as each new group has come to our nation it has encountered initial acts of prejudice and injustice. Fortunately, those shortcomings were eventually corrected and our nation was strengthened. Hopefully, our nation's leaders will soon address many of the current issues surrounding the immigration process in our country. Until this is done, the State of Connecticut should join with the other ten (10) states in our nation which have passed in-State tuition legislation to assist undocumented students.

The Catholic tradition has always been to support immigrants attempting to find a better life for themselves and their families. Because of this tradition, and the facts outlined above. The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference urges you to support Governor's Bill No. 6390.